

## A Corpus-based Study of Thai Persuasive Texts: A Transitivity Analysis of Talisman Advertisements

Pattama Jor Patpong, Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development,  
Mahidol University

This study aims to explore talisman advertisements as examples of persuasive discourse widely found in Thailand. In the Thai context, the advertising of talismans and Buddha images seems prevalent in a wide range of printed media — leaflets, newspapers, magazines, and books. Data for this paper are drawn from a corpus consisting of twenty talisman advertisements. All of them are taken from Thailand's best selling-printed newspaper — *Thairath*. This talisman corpus is composed of 629 clause complexes and 2,565 clause simplexes (involving a little over 20,000 words). The study explores the talisman advertisements stratically by investigating three strata — context, semantics and lexicogrammar. Contextually, the generic structure of the persuasive discourse — Generic Structural Potential (Hasan, 1984b/1996) — is proposed. Semantically, some nuclear and elaborative semantic properties realizing each generic stage are discussed. Lexicogrammatically, an exploration of experiential resources is the main focus of this study: how talisman advertisements are construed grammatically in the transitivity system of Thai.

KEYWORDS: corpus, persuasive discourse, talisman, advertisement, transitivity analysis

### 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

This research aims to extend Thai discourse studies based on narratives and news reports to persuasive discourse and to build up a corpus-based study of advertisement text type focusing on talisman advertisements. In particular, this study explores system of TRANSITIVITY — resources for construing human experiences. This research will report preliminary results of exploring advertising discourse. This study was based on a small corpus of talisman advertisements. The data were drawn from twenty talisman

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Christian M.I.M Matthiessen for his continued supports and encouragement. I wish to express my appreciation to the organisers of the 19th European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference and Workshop at Saarland University. I would like to thank participants at this Systemic Workshop for their comments on the material I presented. I would like to express my thankfulness to Mr Richard Hiam for his editing support. I am alone responsible for any errors or misunderstandings in its conception.

advertisements published in the best selling Thai newspaper — Thairath. This talisman corpus was composed of 615 clause complexes and 2,565 clause simplexes (involving a little over 20,000 words). In this paper I will report on how persuasive discourse is strattally explored by investigating patterning within each “content” stratum — context, semantics and lexicogrammar (focusing on TRANSITIVITY system).

## 2 TEXT TYPOLOGY AND TEXT TYPE

A systemic collection of different text types is referred as a *text typology* — a continuous multidimensional space along the cline of instantiation. Over the last three decades, numerous studies have attempted to explore and classify naturally occurring texts. Several proposals have been made to set criteria and extend linguistic similarities and differences among various kinds of texts (Biber, 1989; Dijk, 1972; Eggins & Slade 1997; Feez, 1995; Longacre, 1974; Martin, 1992; Plum, 1998; Virtanen, 1992; Ure, 1989).

Text types are systemic patterns of instantiation, located along the cline of instantiation at the intermediate region between the two poles of the cline — systemic potential and text instances (Matthiessen, Teruya, and Wu forthcoming: 1): see Figure 1. Text types have also been referred as “registers” and “genres”. In terms of text-based research, these terms are used interchangeably and are all based on the cline of instantiation.

Figure 1: Location of text types (register) along the cline of instantiation (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 28)

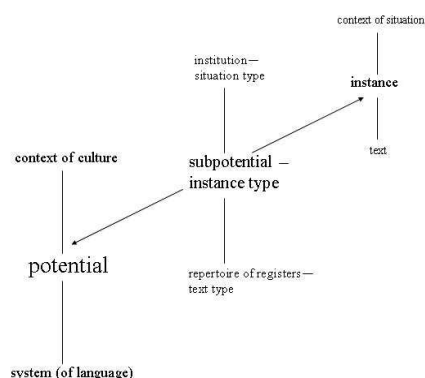


Figure 1 emphasises the power of the instantiation dimension in representing a continuum dimensionality of text instance and potential system. The cline of instantiation ranges from: (i) systemic patterns of text instances which are drawn from profiling of text samples; (ii) sub-potential or instance type; and (iii) overall systemic potential of a given language built up by generalization across a collection of text types.

At the level of context, the cline of instantiation extends from situations (instance) to context of culture (potential), with situation types and institutions occupying the region intermediate between these two poles.

### 3 ADVERTISEMENT AND ITS LOCATION IN URE'S TEXT TYPOLOGY (1989)

Ure (1989) proposes a significant framework for classifying texts, widely known as text typology (see Table 1). The text typology is based on four dimensions (P.P. emphasises): specialization (specialized and non-specialized), medium (spoken and written), social purpose (expounding, reporting, recreating, sharing, recommending, enabling, exploring, and doing), and experiential domain (reflection and action).

Table 1: Ure's text typology (1989)

		written		spoken			
		dialogue	monologue		dialogue		
specialized	1	Letter	Reference book	Lecture	Debate	expounding	reflection
non-specialized	2	Menu	Text book			reporting	action
		Questionnaire	History	Statement in evidence	Cross examination		
			Biography				
			News report				
	3	Comic strip	Memoirs	Radio commentary	Drama	recreating	
			Novels				
					Folk play		
			Stories		Collaborative narrative		
	4	Letter, personal	Diary	Reminiscence	Conversation	sharing	
	5	Letter, business	—	—	Co-operation	doing	
	6	Letter, agony aunt	Advertisements	Prayers	Consultation	recommending	
		Blurb					
		Advice		Business messages			
		Warnings					
specialized	7	Open letter: exhortation	Act of parliament	Sermon	Demonstration	enabling	
			Regulations				
			Knowledge				
	8	Letter to the editor	Critical studies	Speech (TV talks)	Discussion	exploring	reflection
			Investigations				

Based on Ure's text typology, advertisements, as one of text types, are located in non-specialized realm. They are classified as a written monologic text type. Their social purposes are concerned with recommending. They involve action rather than reflection. In addition, the notion of advertisement as a text type in the text typology framework resonates with the Cook's characteristic of advertisements as a discourse type (Cook 1992: 5). The following section deals with literature review of language of advertisement.

#### 4 LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisement is an interesting research topic. It is studied in many disciplines namely mass media communication, fields related to business (i.e. economics, marketing, and management), and linguistics. In terms of linguistic exploration, language of advertising was thoroughly studied by Leech (1966), Dyer (1988), and Cook (1992).

Leech provides preliminary exploration of English standard advertising. In his study, the study of advertising language is partly based on Halliday's contribution (Halliday 1961). Based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, Leech's study covers two main dimensions: STRATIFICATION (i.e. lexicogrammar, semantics, and context) and RANK (i.e. words (including compound words), groups / phrases (including nominal groups and verbal groups), and clauses) (P.P. emphasizes). Dyer examines advertising as a form of communication in contemporary societies and discusses it in its cultural and economic context. Some aspects of advertising language are also examined. Cook's explores advertisements as a discourse type. That is, advertising is viewed as a prominent discourse type in all contemporary societies. He provides a comprehensive introduction to advertising discourse by investigating the language of complementary advertisements. Fourteen prototypical features of advertisements are also provided (Cook 1992: 214).

The advertising is also explored in terms of its strategic goals. Vestergaard and Schröder (1985) elaborate a prototypical description of strategic goals of advertising copy proposed by Lund (1947: 83). Five strategic goals that should be achieved by advertisers are attracting prospective customer's ATTENTION, arousing INTEREST, stimulating DESIRE, creating CONVICTION, and getting a positive ACTION (as cited in Vestergaard and Schröder 1985: 49). These strategic requirements go back to the beginning of the twentieth century and have lead to a number of variants (Ungerer, 2004). In their advertising exploration, attention has been heavily paid on advertisement for women's luxury products appearing in expensive women's magazines. The advertising language was later studied by Toolan (1988). Toolan proposes structural components of advertisements. He also provides a guideline of standard features of English advertisements. In addition, the study of advertising language was studied in terms of information prominence by Fries (1993). In his study, advertisements are investigated in terms of Theme – Rheme structure. A new term is coined — N-Rheme (for New Rheme) referring to the last constituent of clause simplexes or clause complexes. In this study, 63 English written advertisements are examined. N-Rhematic information and Thematic information are investigated and compared to see where

information which is directly relevant to the persuasive goals of the advertisements (e.g., company or product name, product features, product functions, product evaluations) is placed in the clause structure. The study reveals that those persuasive functions of advertising typically are placed at the N-Rheme position and given focal attention. These four main studies explore advertising language as it is embedded in context of situation. That is, we cannot study advertisement without a general picture of the relation between language and situation (Leech 1966: 4).

Based in literature review, it can be seen that there are a number of studies of English advertisements. Moreover, researches on Thai advertisements are mainly focused on effects of advertising on mass media, marketing and advertising strategies. There is, however, no attempt to examine Thai advertisements in systemic functional terms. This research is the first attempt to explore Thai talisman advertisements.

## 5 TEXT SELECTION

This study was a preliminary research. It aimed to explore a grammatical perspective on discourse and to build up a corpus-based analysis of advertisement text type (Ure 1989). In this current study, as an initial stage of the corpus-based analysis, twenty talisman advertisements were analysed. They were taken from the best selling Thai newspaper — *Thairath*. The twenty texts were collected from March 2005 to March 2007. There were 144 relative frequencies of printed copies of these twenty talisman advertisements (see Table 2). There are 615 clause complexes and 2,565 clause simplexes. The following section deals with a stratal analysis of the twenty talisman advertisements. It begins with context stratum. This is followed by a preliminary exploration of semantic stratum. Then the system of TRANSITIVITY of the twenty talisman advertisements are analysed.

Table 2: Text selection and number of clauses analysed

Text	Title (in brief)	ideology / symbol	frequencies of print	complexes	simplexes	total of words
1.	<i>Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phun Sap</i> creates miracles	human: Jujaka	41	33	124	1,034
2.	<i>Nok Khum Ma Rum calling for prosperities</i>	animal: bird: Nok Khum	24	54	258	1,866
3.	<i>Cia Buay</i> and holy power	animal: reptile: dragon and turtle	18	28	90	818
4.	“ <i>Richly wealth</i> ” of Luang Pho Phun, Phailom Temple	animal: bird: namely Sarika plant: floral parasite namely Marum	9	23	79	620
5.	Power of the <i>Great Ruan Turtle</i>	animal: turtle	8	28	98	743
6.	“ <i>Luk Om Phayakmekha</i> ” of Khru Ba Kritsana Inthawanno	animal: tiger	5	39	108	986
7.	The greatest supernatural power of <i>miraculous Thep Nang Chan</i> series 9 model “ <i>Complete Success</i> ”	Goddess namely Thep Nang Chan	5	31	112	948

8.	<b>“Yod Ket of Luang Pho Khun Paritsuttho”</b>	Talisman is made of auspicious substances	4	46	230	1,913
9.	<b>“Kai Fa”</b> of Luang Pho Khun	animal: pheasant	4	25	140	1,380
10.	<b>“Fish calling for prosperities”</b>	animal: fish	4	14	93	878
11.	<b>Luk Sawat</b>	plant	4	28	137	889
12.	<b>Nangkhwak KhwakSap</b> (Nangkhwak calling for prosperity) <b>Ma Rum Khwak Sap</b> (Ma Rum calling for prosperity)	plant	3	56	239	2,101
13.	<b>Ka Fak Ma Rum</b> offers luck and fortune	floral parasite	3	21	83	665
14.	<b>Kracapnguen Kracaphoung</b> of Luang Pho Phet.	Plant: a kind of water chestnut ( <i>Trapa bicornis</i> )	3	27	127	992
15.	<b>“Ngoknguen Ngokthoung”</b> of Khruba Khamkheunkaew	non specified	3	18	69	750
16.	<b>Pla Taphiannguen Taphianthoung</b>	animal: fish	2	35	135	1,202
17.	Phrasomdet Wat Rakhang series <b>“the most popular mold 150 years”</b> .	Talisman is made of auspicious substances	1	32	131	1,264
18.	Floating <b>Takut</b>	non specified	1	17	101	766
19.	<b>Nang Khwak calling for prosperity – Great fortune house lizard</b> of Luang Pho Phet Saithoungphattana Temple	human: Nang Khwak animal: lizard, turtle	1	26	81	838
20.	<b>Phrasomdet Nangphraya So. Ko.</b>	Talisman is made of auspicious substances	1	34	130	1,106
Total			144	615	2,565	21,759

## 6 CONTEXT OF ADVERTISEMENT DISCOURSE

Language is viewed as one kind of a higher-order semiotic system — a complex and adaptive system for making meaning (Halliday 1985: 7; Matthiessen 2001). This means that language is explored “ecologically”, and it is always investigated in relation to, instead of being insulated from, its environment. In other words, language is investigated through naturally occurring texts functioning in its context.

### 6.1 CONTEXT OF SITUATION: RECOMMENDING GOODS-OR-SERVICES

The realization of situational context of a given language is based on the metafunctional spectrum: field is realized by the ideational metafunction, tenor by the interpersonal one, and mode by the textual one (Halliday 1978; Halliday and Hasan 1985; Martin 1992). Based on Halliday (1977: 200-201; 1978: 142-143; 1985: 12), the three contextual values are described as follows:

Field as the social action is concerned with what is going on in the situation of recommending goods-or-services: the nature of the social processes that make up advertisements, and the nature of the domain of experience construed by particular text type.

Tenor as the role structure is concerned with who is taking part in the situation: the nature of the interactants' roles in the situation they are operating in, the nature of speech roles enacted through the exchanges that making up the advertisements, and the relationship between the interactants in terms of social hierarchy and distance.

Mode as the symbolic organization is concerned with the role that language is playing in the unfolding context: the division between language and other social processes, in creating situation, the channel assigned to language. It includes role of language, channel, and medium.

In order to give a context of situation of the advertisements in general and talisman advertisements in particular, I characterize the contextual values of the advertisements represented in terms of field, tenor, and mode. Table 3 summarises the three contextual values of the advertising discourse.

Table 3: The contextual values of advertisement discourse

<b>contextual values</b>	<b>subtypes</b>	<b>description</b>
Field	social processes	commercial recommendation; recommending goods-or-services to a prospective public through giving information strategy, mass media, newspaper (printed forms)
	social action domain	persuade customers to purchase goods-or-services nature of information being given: information given with <b>commercial transaction goal</b>
Tenor	institutional role hierarchy	copy writer – customers (i) unequal: copy writer as an expert – customers as novices in this particular information (cf. Wight 1972: 9 as cited in Vestergaard and Schröder (1985: 2)); (ii) equal: copy writer as an expert – prospective customers as talisman experts who seek for good talismans that meet their desires (cf. Vestergaard and Schröder (1985: 2))
	interactant	expert: copy writer / audience: interested public, especially talisman buyers, who are seeking for good luck and fortune, plus some groups of special concerns (whose actions many be affected by the information, e.g. talisman producers)
	distance	no specific relationship between copy writers and customers
Mode	speech role medium	information giver – information receiver Written, print, prose format with photographic presentation
	turn-taking	monologue between unequal participants (Toolan 1988: 54) and equal participants

Mode	rhetorical mode	persuasive mode, the symbolic organization of the text involving the pragmatic purpose oriented to the field of public interest; it is accompanied by other visual modes, photos of successful individuals, talismans sold
------	-----------------	--

## 6.2 CONTEXTUAL REALIZATION: TEXT STRUCTURE

As mentioned above, at the contextual stratum, advertisements can be viewed in terms of variables of field, tenor, and mode. These contextual values can be realized structurally by different stages unfolding through time. Leech (1966: 59) proposes a press advertisement structure. (as shown in Figure 2). This advertisement structure is further elaborated and discussed by Toolan (1988: 55) as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Leech's press advertisement structure (Leech 1966)

Headline	<i>[Illustration(s)]</i>
Body copy	main part of the advertising message composed of <i>subheads</i>
Signature line	brand-name accompanied by a price-tag, slogan, trade-mark, ect.
Standing details	cut-out coupon and its information, company's address, legal information

As illustrated in Figure 2, the standard components of press advertisements are organized into a series of ordered elements — from top to bottom. The headline and signature line are obligatory components of a press advertisement, while other components are optional and can be omitted (Leech 1966: 59).



Figure 3: Toolan’s advertisement components (Toolan 1988)

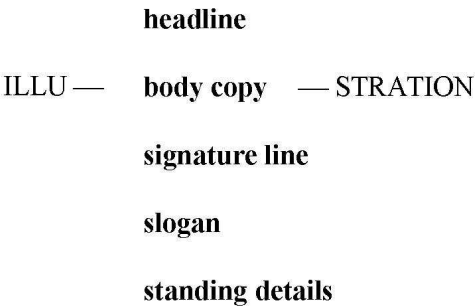
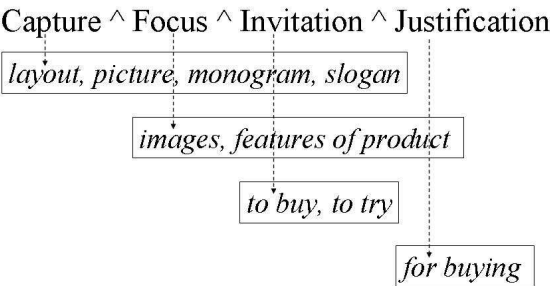


Figure 3 illustrates the components that can be superimposed or integrated with other components by means of images, pictorial presentation, whereas the other five components are verbal expressions. They typically occur in the vertical sequence.

In systemic functional linguistics, the structural stages mentioned above are known as “Generic Structure Potential” (GSP). The interest in generic (or schematic) structure of texts has been greatly influenced by Hasan (Halliday and Hasan 1985; Hasan 1978, 1984b/1996, and 1984c) and Martin (1992). Fahey (2005) proposes a Generic Structure Potential of magazine advertisements as presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Fahey’s Generic Structural Potential of magazine advertisement (adapted from Fahey 2005)



As Figure 4 shows, the text structure of magazine advertisements is defined by a particular generic structure of Capture ^ Focus ^ Invitation ^ Justification. It is organized in terms of linear structure. Every generic stage is realized by a selected segment of text.

The Generic Structure Potential (GSP) of this present study is based on Hasan's generic structure approach (Hasan 1984b/1996, 1984c). Her framework for describing nursery tales is used, supplemented by a few extra symbols to customize to Thai talisman advertisements. Thus, the twenty Thai talisman advertisements can be analysed into eighteen generic stages as shown below. The Generic Structure Potential's symbols and notions are given in Table 4.

Capture ^ (Hook) / (Showcase) ^ (Orientation) ^ (Bibliography) ^ (Challenge<sup>R</sup>) ^  
 [(Product attribute<sup>N</sup>) • (Product production<sup>R</sup>) ^] (History) ^ (Justification) ^  
 (Worship) ^ (Propaganda) ^ [(Pre-Experience<sup>N</sup>) ^ Experience<sup>N</sup>] (Coda) / (Opinion) ^  
 Purchase information ^ (Sold items)

Table 4: Symbols and notions of Generic Structure Potential (adapted from Hasan 1984b/1996)

( ) round brackets	enclose optional elements such as Orientation, Bibliography.
No round bracket	indicates obligatory elements.
[ ] square brackets	enclose the boundaries of a limitation of sequence. Indicated by enclosing the relevant elements, because mobile elements are mobile within certain limits.
^ carat sign	indicates relative sequence.
/ slant sign	indicates a complementary distribution of the two elements occurring preceding and following the slant sign.
• dot sign	indicates that the order of the elements on the two sides of the dot is reversible.
Superscript <sup>N</sup>	indicates the possibility of several occurrences for that element.
Superscript <sup>R</sup>	indicates the possibility of iteration for that element.

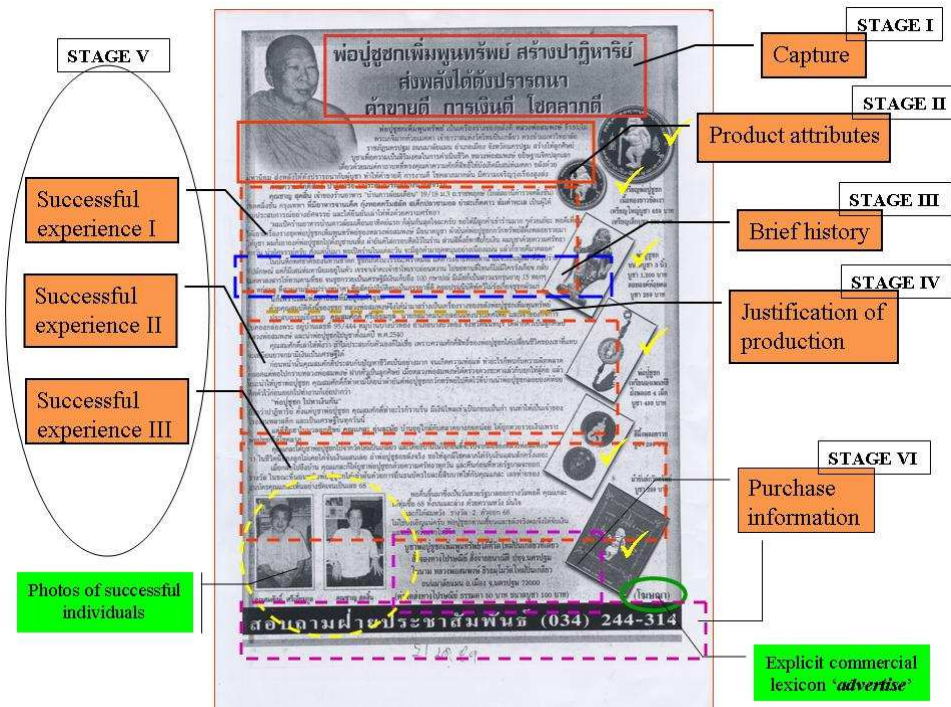
This paper is concerned with a detailed discussion of Text 1: "Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles" due to its highest frequency of print (i.e. 41 times during 2005 - 2007). The discussion starts with representation of Generic Structure Potential. It is followed by an exploration of some semantic properties of generic stage of Capture. The semantic properties are drawn from Text 1- Text 7. It is concluded by a lexicogrammatial analysis. Each stage of Text 1: "Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles" is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Generic Structure Potential of Text 1: “Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles”

No. of clauses	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV	Stage V	Stage VI
	Capture	Product attribute(s)	Brief history	Justification of production	Successful experience	Purchase information
Range of clauses	Clauses 1-4	Clauses 5-6	Clauses 7-10	Clauses 11	Clauses 12-28	Clauses 29-33
Number of clauses	5 clauses	12 clauses	21 clauses	1 clause	78 clauses	7 clauses
simplexes	[4.03%]	[9.68%]	[16.93%]	[0.81%]	[62.90%]	[5.65%]
N = 33 complex clauses, 124 simple clauses						

Table 5 shows six different stages which make up Text 1: “Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles”. Based on text structure, each stage unfolds through time and is organized in terms of linear structure. Stage V is highly elaborated, as there are a number of clauses constructing this stage. Figure 5 illustrates the six stages of Generic Structure Potential as presented in the print advertisement.

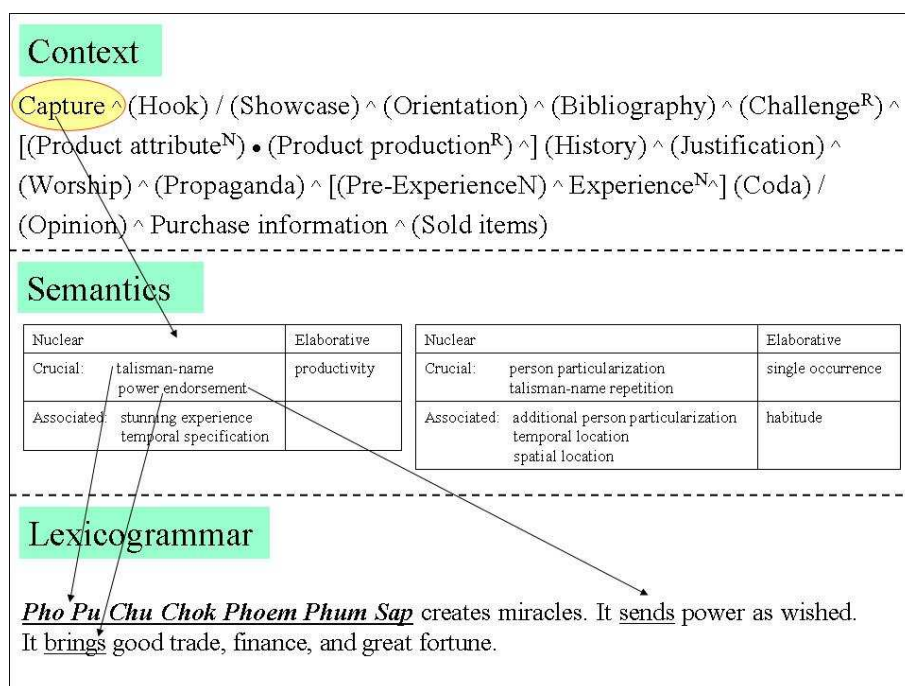
Figure 5: Representation of six stages of Text 1: “Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles”



## 7 SEMANTIC PROPERTIES OF TALISMAN ADVERTISEMENTS

Each generic stage discussed above is realized by different semantic properties which are in turn achieved by lexicogrammatical realization. The following section is concerned with a discussion of semantic properties of the generic stage of Capture. The semantic properties are based on instances taken from Text 1 – Text 7.

Figure 6: Generic Structural Potential, semantic properties, and lexicogrammatical realization of Text 1: “Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phum Sap creates miracles”



As the Figure 6 shown, it illustrates the realization of the generic stage of Capture at the contextual stratum, which is in turn realized by the semantic properties of nuclear and elaborative properties at the semantic stratum, which is in turn realized by lexicogrammatical selections at the lexicogrammar stratum.

### 7.1 REALIZATION OF SEMANTIC PROPERTY: CAPTURE

The generic stage of Capture comprises two types of semantic properties — nuclear and elaborative. The nuclear properties are important in attracting the prospective customer’s interest by means of emphasising the talisman-name, and the talisman’s power, however the advertisement can progress without any selection from the elaborative properties — they are therefore optional (see also Hasan 1984b/1996).

Table 6 summaries the possible features of generic stage of Capture which define the nuclear and elaborative properties. The lexicogrammatical patterns are also specified in a realization column.

Table 6: Semantic properties of Capture instantiated from Text 1 – Text 7

[Text 1] *Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phun Sap* creates miracles. It sends power as wished. It brings good trade, finance, and great fortune.

[Text 2] *Nok Khum Ma Rum calling for prosperity*.

Recently a believer of Luang Pho Khun won a jackpot of 38 million baht.

[Text 3] *Cia Buay* and holy power. It brings fortune. It provides for good trade and business.

[Text 4] Talismans series “*Richly wealth*” of Luang Pho Phun, Phailom Temple. They bring luck and fortune.

[Text 5] Power of the *Great Ruan Turtle*. It brings luck and long life. It was consecrated by Luang Pu Thong. It is made of several auspicious floral parasites ‘Ka Faak’.

[Text 6] Khru Ba Kritsana Inthawanno gives luck and fortune. Business is prosperous. There is an experience of “*Luk Om Phayakmekha*”.

[Text 7] The greatest supernatural power of *miraculous Thep Nang Chan* series 9 model “*Complete Success*” The Thep Nang Chan talisman sends power as desired for both business and fortune.

#### Possible features

**talisman-name:** realized by an nominal group with feature ‘prosperity’, ‘wealth’, ‘success’: the nominal group is elaborated by an adverbial group

**power endorsement:** realized by ‘doing’ material processes; Actor: talisman; Goal: good outcome (i.e. good business, finance, fortune, luck, long life)

**Productivity:** realized by a verbal process; Sayer: a monk

**Stunning experience:** realized by a ‘doing’ material process; Actor: talisman’s believer; Goal: a lottery’s jackpot.

**Temporal specification:** realized by a temporal adjunct with feature ‘recent’

#### Realization

Pho Pu Chu Chok Phoem Phun Sap (Text 1)

Nok Khum Ma Rum calling for prosperity (Text 2)

Cia Buay (Text 3)

Richly wealth (Text 4)

Great Ruan Turtle (Text 5)

Luk Om Phayakmekha (Text 6)

Miraculous Thep Nang Chan (Text 7)

It brings good trade, finance, and great fortune. (Text 1)

It brings fortune. (Text 3)

They bring luck and fortune. (Text 4)

It brings luck and long life. (Text 5)

The Thep Nang Chan talisman sends power (Text 7)

It was consecrated by Luang Pu Thong. (Text 5)

Recently a believer of Luang Pho Khun won a jackpot of 38 million baht. (Text 2)

## 8 LEXICOGRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF TALISMAN ADVERTISEMENTS: THE IDEATIONAL METAFUNCTION

The ideational metafunction is concerned with ideation, and with construing our experience of the world around us and inside us. It provides the potential for creating, maintaining, and revising knowledge in the form of meaning (the semantic system), for classifying, reasoning about, and modeling our experience, both in commonsense — folk-ways, and in uncommonsense — scientific ways (Halliday and Matthiessen 1999; Matthiessen 1995).

The ideational metafunction can be divided into two subtypes embodying different modes of construing experiences — experiential and logical. The experiential metafunction construes experience in terms of configurations, such as the configuration of a process, participants involved in it and attendant circumstances, and its grammatical system is TRANSITIVITY. The logical metafunction construes experience as chains, developed out of highly generalized relations such as elaboration, exemplification, and modification, and its grammatical systems include TAXIS and LOGICO-SEMANTIC TYPE. This paper is focused on the experiential mode of ideational metafunction. It is discussed in the following section.

## 9 THE EXPERIENTIAL CLAUSE GRAMMAR: THE SYSTEM OF TRANSITIVITY

This section is concerned with the system of TRANSITIVITY of the talisman advertisements. Matthiessen (1995: 194) characterizes that the system of TRANSITIVITY is resources for construing (interpreting and representing) human experience of change or on-going in the flow of events inside and around us. A quantum of change in the flow of events is construed as a configuration of a process, participant involved, and attendant circumstances.

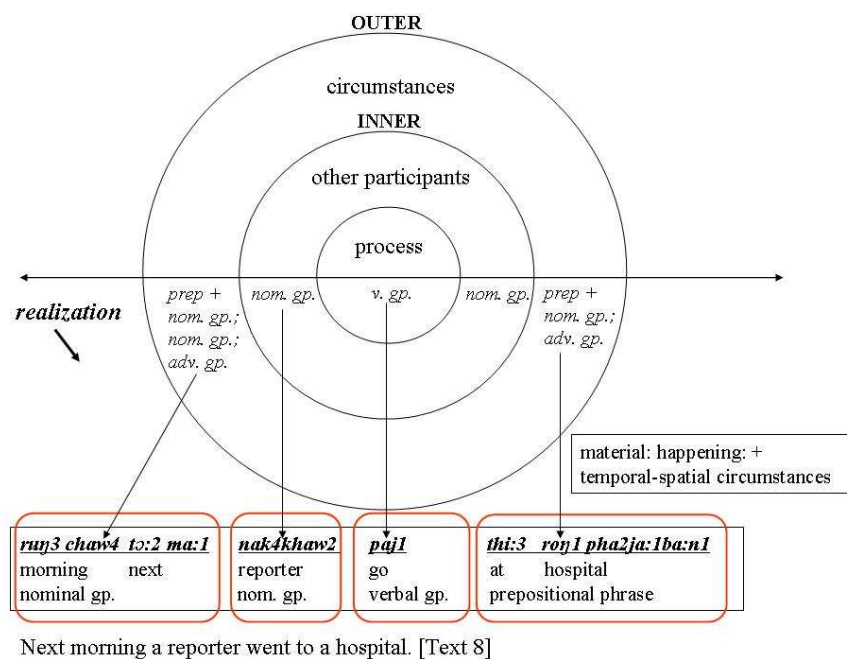
The TRANSITIVITY system embodies two parts: nuclear TRANSITIVITY (i.e. the transitivity of processes and participants) and circumstantial TRANSITIVITY (i.e. the transitivity of circumstances). Each configuration will be elaborated on in turn.

Process, as the process of meaning, is characterized by its potential for organizing participants into an experiential configuration. In Thai, the process is organized according to verbal group complexity: that is, the process can be expressed by a verbal group simple, or a verbal group complex (Patpong 2006).

Participants are inherent in process. They physically and mentally take part in the process in a number of specific ways: acting, sensing, saying, having, being, and existing. The participant is directly involved with the process. In the clausal structure, there may be one or two additional participants, depending on the nature of the process.

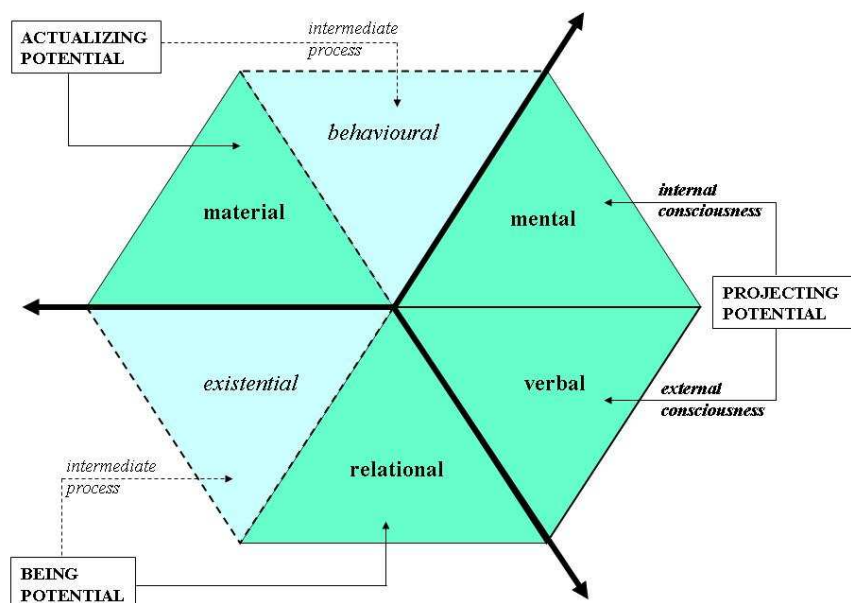
Circumstances are transitivity components, which are typically less associated with the process, and are not inherent to it: that is, they are indirectly involved with the process. They specify a number of semantic relationships of the process — temporal or spatial location, extent in time and space (i.e. duration and distance), cause, reason, manner, and accompaniment. An example of a transitivity clause is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: A realization statement of an experiential clause



In systemic functional terms, the domains of experience are divided into three domains: (i) doing and happening; (ii) sensing and saying; and (iii) being and having. These three experiential domains thus constitute four distinct process types — material, mental, verbal, and relational (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Matthiessen 1995, 1999). There are two additional, intermediate process types: behavioural processes which are interpreted as a subtype of material; existential processes which are interpreted as a subtype of relational (See Patpong 2006: 399). Figure 8 shows the four primary process types, with intermediate process types of behavioural and existential.

Figure 8: Four primary process types and two intermediate process types



## 9.1 CONSTRUING THE FLOW OF EVENTS

In this section, I will illustrate how talisman advertisements are represented; that is, clauses are viewed as representations (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Matthiessen 1995, 1999). It is represented as the flow of events: how the talisman advertisements are presented through the clauses for construing human experiences (i.e. experiences of advertisement copy writers, talisman's believers, general customers as well as potential / prospective customers).

## 9.2 NUCLEAR TRANSITIVITY PROFILE OF THE TALISMAN ADVERTISEMENTS

There are six process types instantiated in the talisman advertisements. The six process types are material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential. The counts are presented in Table 7.



Table 7: Relative selections of process types with instantiation of Process type [N = 2,518]  
[N – number of simple clauses and embedded clauses]

Process type	Subtype	Number of clauses	Percentage
material	happening	1,073	42.61 %
	doing		
behavioural		10	0.40 %
mental	perceptive	305	12.11 %
	cognitive		
	desiderative		
	emotive		
verbal		264	10.48 %
relational	attribute	707	28.08
	identifying		
existential		159	6.32 %

Table 7 shows the frequency of selection of different process types averaged over the twenty talisman advertisements. This provides a profile of the frequency of instantiation of the system choices which constitute this particular advertising discourse.

As Table 7 shows, the most frequent selection is material at around 42.61 % (the transitivity grammar of happening and doing). This is followed by relational at around 28.08 % (the transitivity grammar of being and having). It is in turn followed by mental at around 12.11 % (the transitivity grammar of sensing). The next selection is verbal at around 10.48 % (the transitivity grammar of saying). This is followed by existential at around 6.32 % (the transitivity grammar of existing). Behavioural is the minor process type in terms of frequency at around 0.40 % (the transitivity grammar of behaving).

The high selection of material processes in this research is highly motivated, as the talisman advertisements are concerned with doing a commodity transaction — purchasing goods-or-services. Relational processes are the second most frequent process types. This relational selection is motivated since one of the strategic goals of advertisement copy writers is to gain the potential customer's attention and interest by arousing the customer's desire which leads to desirable action — leading the customer to purchase the advertised product. Arousing desire can be achieved by consistently describing product features, functions, evaluation, and advantages (Leech 1966; Fries 1993; Ungerer 2004). The mental processes are profiled as the third count in the process selection. This selection is strongly motivated as the talisman advertisements provide persuasive information in relation to a successful individual's sensing processes related to the magic power of advertised talismans (e.g., belief, disbelief, respect, disrespect, knowing, thinking, and realizing). This persuasive message is achieved by continuously provoking the individual's belief before and after becoming an owner and worshipping the advertised talisman. The mental processes (especially cognitive mental processes) are mainly found in the generic stage of Experience. They are elaborated in formula passages, for example:

(1) Text 2: “Nok Khum Ma Rum calling for prosperities”

*Whoever does believe on this kind of story (superstitious story), it is okay to believe that. Whoever does not believe, it is also okay. There is no one stopping you from belief or disbelief on that story. But my whole family does believe on this story.*

(2) Text 8: “Yod Ket of Luang Pho Khun Paritsuttho”

*Whoever does believe, it is okay. Whoever does not believe, it is does not matter or bother me (talisman’s believer). But, I do believe it.*

(3) Text 10: “Fish calling for prosperities”

*This kind of story is superstitious. Whoever does believe or disbelieve. It is up to individual’s belief. Whoever does not believe, one should not be disrespectful to the talisman.*

(4) Text 12: “Nangkhwak KhwakSap Ma Rum Khwak Sap”

*Whoever does not believe this story (story of an individual’s successful experience), one has to believe. One cannot be disrespectful to the superstitious story.*

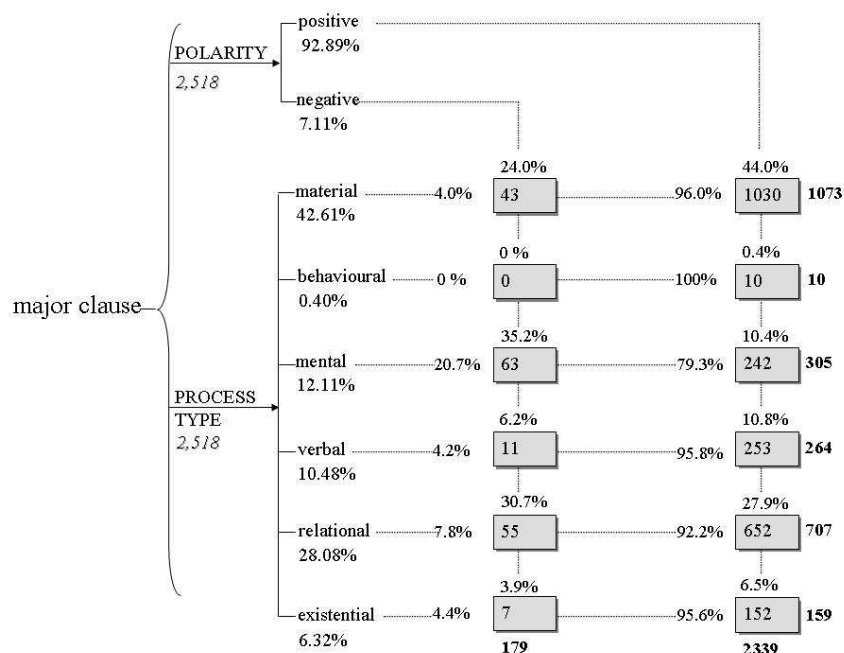
Verbal processes are counted as the fourth rank of frequency. They are used by successful talisman believers who narrate their personal miracle experiences and are exploited by reporters who report and interview on the successful experiences.

In exploring transitivity profile, it is interesting to explore relative frequencies of the intersection of simultaneous systems (both originating from the same and the different metafunctions) (See Matthiessen 1999). The following section deals with an intersection of two different metafunctions — interpersonal and experiential.

### 9.3 INTERSECTION OF SIMULTANEOUS SYSTEMS: CLAUSE (INTERPERSONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL): POLARITY AND PROCESS TYPE

POLARITY and PROCESS TYPE are systems originating from different metafunctions: the interpersonal and experiential metafunctions respectively. The relative frequencies of the instantiation of terms in POLARITY and PROCESS TYPE are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: System of interpersonal and experiential clauses: POLARITY and PROCESS TYPE  
[N = 2,518 instances]



In general, the ratio of *positive* to *negative* polarity varies across the process types. This variation is predictable. This sample supports a skewed count of quantitative tendencies having a 0.9 to 0.1 ratio of the two-term system (Halliday 1999a, 1999b, 1992). In this skewed ratio, *positive* is the unmarked choice across different process types and *negative* is the marked one. The negative term is realized by a negative marker *maj3*. In a detailed investigation, *negative* varies from the lowest proportion of 0 % in behavioural clauses and a higher proportion of 35.2% in mental clauses. The highest negative selection of mental processes is motivated, as the negative mental choices are used to express the talisman believer's negative attitude and hardship. The selection of negative mental processes is frequently found before the talisman believer purchases the advertised talisman. After purchasing and worshipping, the talisman believer's attitude becomes positive. Their lives have changed in a positive way. That is, the hardship and life difficulties are relieved.

The scale of negativity across process types is shown below. It ranges from the lowest negative attraction to the highest one.

#### **Low negative attraction**

#### **High negation attraction**

behavioural [0 %] > existential [3.9%] > verbal [6.2%] > material [24.0%] >  
relational [30.7%] > mental [35.2%]

#### 9.4 CIRCUMSTANTIAL TRANSITIVITY PROFILE OF THE TALISMAN ADVERTISEMENTS: PROCESS TYPE AND CIRCUMSTANTIATION

The systems of AGENCY and PROCESS TYPE construe the nuclear domain of a quantum of change. This nucleus can be augmented by circumstantial TRANSITIVITY (CIRCUMSTANTIATION). Table 8 shows the intersection of PROCESS TYPE with CIRCUMSTANTIATION.

Table 8: Intersection of PROCESS TYPE and CIRCUMSTANTIATION in the twenty talisman advertisements

Circumstance Type	Circumstance sub-category	Doing		Sensing		Being		#	%
		material	behavioural	mental	verbal	relational	existential		
locative	time	76	0	14	11	33	10	144	21.40
	place	131	0	15	6	36	11	199	29.57
extent	duration	23	0	4	6	3	0	36	5.35
	distance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
manner	frequency	10	0	1	1	1	1	14	2.08
	means	8	0	0	0	1	0	9	1.34
	quality	84	0	28	13	45	26	196	29.12
	comparison	3	0	0	1	3	0	7	1.04
cause	degree	3	0	1	0	1	0	5	0.74
	reason	5	0	0	1	3	0	9	1.34
	purpose	6	0	0	1	6	0	13	1.93
	behalf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
contingency	condition	12	0	3	1	2	1	19	2.82
	concession	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
accompaniment	comitative	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.30
	guise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
role	product	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	source	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
angle	view point	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0.44
	matter	0	0	13	4	0	0	17	2.53
Total # of circumstance		364	0	79	45	136	49	673	100%
Total % of circumstance		54.09	0	11.74	6.68	20.21	7.28	100%	100%

Table 8 shows that there are clearly favored and non-favored combinations of circumstantial types and process types. For example, the combination of material and temporal location and spatial location are clearly favoured. Matter is attracted to mental and verbal processes. Moreover, the distribution of some circumstantial types seems to vary across process type. For example, circumstance of qualitative Manner is more strongly attracted to material clauses (98 instances). This is followed by relational clauses (45 instances), which is in turn followed by mental clauses (28 instances), and existential clauses at about equal measure (26 instances). Verbal clause (13 instances) and “behavioural” clauses (0 instance) have minor counts in terms of frequency.

The relative frequencies of circumstantial selections vary across process types. For example:

<b>material:</b>	place > time > quality > duration > condition > frequency > ...
<b>behavioural:</b>	none > none > none > ...
<b>mental:</b>	quality > place > time > matter > duration > condition > ...
<b>verbal:</b>	quality > time > place / duration > matter > ...
<b>relational:</b>	quality > place > time > purpose > duration / comparison > ...
<b>existential:</b>	quality > place > time > frequency / condition > ...

## 10 CONCLUSION

In this research, advertisements have been explored as a type of advertising discourse, based on the selected corpus of twenty talisman advertisements. Texts are constructed as an ongoing process of selection of features in simultaneous systems. These selections create patterns as the text unfolds — logogenetic patterns (Matthiessen 2002). By tracking the local selections, the pattern of lexicogrammar in talisman advertisements unfold in the texts. Within the dimension of STRATIFICATION, three strata of talisman advertisements are investigated — context, semantics, and lexicogrammar.

At the contextual stratum, the contextual values (i.e., Field, Tenor, and Mode values) are discussed. Within this contextual level, the generic structure potential of the twenty talisman advertisements is investigated. Based on Hasan's pioneering work on the contextual configuration, the twenty talisman advertisements are analysed into eighteen generic stages.

At the semantics stratum, all eighteen generic stages are realized by semantic properties. The semantic properties comprise nuclear and elaborative semantic repertoires. The talisman advertisements realized as systems of meaning are in turn realized by systems of wordings — lexicogrammar.

The lexicogrammar stratum is metafunctionally explored. The analysis is based on experiential clause grammar — the system of TRANSITIVITY. Experientially, human experience is construed by different process types involving different participant roles. The findings reveal that material processes are selected more frequently than any other process types (42.61 %). This suggests that these talisman advertisements are largely concerned with actions and events. Relational processes are selected in the second rank of frequency (28.08 %). They express product attributes, product production and habitude of believers.

This current paper is concerned with the overall transitivity selections of talisman advertisements. There remain other avenues for further researches. Furthermore, within the corpus of talisman advertisements it is interesting to explore the transitivity profiles of different stages which make up this particular text type. It can be hypothesized that different stages are typically featured by different favourite process types (Matthiessen 1995: 360).

In terms of advertising strategies, advertising copy writers exploit some key principles to create and recommend goods-or-services to prospective customers. Some key principles of successful advertisements are recommended as follows (based on Leech 1966: 27; Toolan 1988: 53; Fries 1993):

- Grab potential customers' attention and interest by expressing in Capture, Hook and Showcase stages;
- Sustain potential customers' attention and interest by elaborating on product attributes, values, functions;
- Reinforce memorability by using repetition strategy. The talisman-name is selected repeatedly as both in unmarked Theme position and New-Rheme position (Fries 1993);
- Convey selling power by provoking potential customers towards the right reaction (i.e., buy, contact, find / phone for more information, and pay);
- Carefully present product features, functions, and evaluations through Thematic information and N-Rhematic information (Fries 1993).

This current study contributes to advertisement copy writing of this particular advertisement by suggesting writing strategies as follows:

- Provide examples of successful experiences with specific details of the believers (at least one personal experience). Those experiences promote and provoke opportunities for believers to experience the magical power by buying, trying on, or worshipping the advertised talisman.
- Emphasise on talisman attributes and functions both physical (how it is produced, its function) and spiritual (how its supernatural power changes one's life: miraculous success).

Advertising is an excellent example of the art of persuasion. In order to achieve the desired outcome, the key functions of advertising are to inform about a product's characteristics, to influence reader/listener attitudes (to purchase the promoted product), and to attract and sustain reader/listener needs and attention in systemic ways (Toolan 1988).

## REFERENCES

- Biber, Douglas. 1989. A typology of English texts. *Linguistics* 27: 3-43.
- Caffarel, Alice, James R. Martin and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen 2004. Introduction: systemic functional typology. In Caffarel, Alice, James R. Martin and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen (eds.), *Language typology: a functional perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Cook, Guy. 1992. *The Discourse of Advertising*. New York: Routledge.
- Dijk, Teun A. van. 1972. Foundations of Typologies of Texts. *Semiotica* 4(6). 297-323.
- Dyer, Gillian. 1988. *Advertising as Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Eggins, S. and Di Slade. 1997. *Analysing casual conversation*. London: Cassell.
- Fahey, Rhondda. 2005. Language of advertising. BBA 316's handout. MS. Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University
- Feez, Susan. 1995. Genres in the secondary school. MS.
- Fries, Peter H. 1993. Information flow in written advertising. In James Alatis (ed.), *Language, communication and social meaning*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 336-352.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1961. Categories of the theory of grammar. *Word* 17(3). 241-292.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1977. Text as semantic choice in social contexts. In Teun A. van Dijk and Jonoss Peto (eds.), *Grammars and descriptions: studies in text Theory and text analysis*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 176-225.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1978. *Language as social semiotic: the social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1984. Linguistics in the university: the question of social accountability. In James E. Copeland (ed.), *New directions in linguistics and semiotics*. Houston, Texas: Rice University Studies. 51-67.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1985. Systemic background. In J.D. Benson and W. Greaves (eds.), *Systemic perspectives on discourse*. Volume.1. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1991a. Corpus studies and probabilistic grammar. In Karin Aijmer and Bengt Altenberg (eds.), *English corpus linguistics: studies in honour of Jan Svartvik*. London: Longman. 33-44.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1991b. Towards probabilistic interpretations. In Ventola, Eija (ed.), *Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs 55: Functional and Systemic Linguistics Approaches and Uses*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1992. Language as system and language as instance: The corpus as a theoretical construct. In Svartvik, Jan (ed.), *Directions in Corpus Linguistics*. Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 82, Stockholm, 4-8 August 1991, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 61-77.
- Halliday, M. A. K. and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. 1999. *Construing experience through meaning: a language-based approach to cognition*. London: Cassell.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Christian M.I.M. Matthiessen. 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2004. *An introduction to functional grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Ruquiya Hasan. 1985. *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in social-semiotic perspective*. Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press. (Language and Learning Series).
- Hasan, Ruquiya. 1978. Text in the systemic-functional model. In Wolfgang. Dressler. (ed.), *Current trends in textlinguistics*. Berlin: de Gruyter. 228-246.
- Hasan, Ruquiya. 1979. On the notion of text. In Peto\_fi, J.S. (ed.), *Text vs. sentence: Basic questions of textlinguistics*. (Papers in Textlinguistics 20.2). Buske: Hamburg.
- Hasan, Ruquiya. 1984a. Coherence and cohesive harmony. In James Flood (ed.), *Understanding reading comprehension: cognition, language and the structure of prose*. Newark: International Reading Association.

- Hasan, Ruquiya. 1984b/1996. The nursery tales as a genre. *Nottingham Linguistic Circular*. 13: 71-102. (Reprinted in Hasan, Ruquiya. 1996. *Ways of saying: ways of meaning*. London: Cassell.)
- Hasan, Ruquiya. 1984c. The structure of the nursery tale: an essay in text typology. In L. Coveri (ed.), *Linguistica Testuale*. Rome: Bulzoni.
- Hass, Mary. R. 1964. *Thai-English Student's Dictionary*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Leech, G. 1966. *English in advertising*. London: Longman.
- Longacre, Robert E. 1974. Narrative versus other discourse genre. In R.M. Brend (ed.), *Advances in Tagmemics*. Amsterdam: North- Holland. 357-367.
- Martin, James R. 1992. *English Text: System and Structure*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 1988. Organizing text: rhetorical schemas and generic structure potential. MS. University of Sydney.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 1992. Interpreting the textual metafunction. In Martin Davies and Louise Ravelli (eds.), *Advances in systemic linguistics: recent theory and practice*. London: Pinter.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 1993. Register in the round: diversity in a unified theory of register analysis. In Mohsen Ghadessy (ed.), *Register analysis: theory and practice*. London: Pinter. 221-291.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 1995. *Lexicogrammatical cartography: English systems*. Tokyo: International Language Sciences Publishers.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 1999. The system of transitivity: an exploratory study of text-based profiles. *Functions of Language* 6(1). 1-51.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 2000. Narrative register — lexicogrammatical patterns. MS. Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 2001. Notes on systemic functional research. MS. Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University.
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 2002. Lexicogrammar in discourse development: logogenetic patterns of wording. In Guowen, H. and W. Zongyan (eds.), *Discourse and language functions*. Shanghai: Foreign Language and Research Press. 91-126
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. 2003. Experiential clause grammar: TRANSITIVITY. MS. Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University
- Matthiessen, Christian, M.I.M. 2004. Frequency profiles of some basic grammatical systems: an interim report. In Hunston, Susan., Geoff Thompson (eds.), *System and corpus: exploring connections*. London: Equinox. (Paper presented at The 29<sup>th</sup> Systemic Functional Linguistics Congress: Systemic Linguistics and the Corpus at The University of Liverpool, 15-19 July 2002.)
- Matthiessen, Christian M.I.M. n.d. Micro-generic stages — realization. MS. Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University
- Matthiessen, Christian, M.I.M., Kazuhiro Teruya & Canzhong Wu. forthcoming. Text typology: registers in situation types and contextual structures. (draft 2004).
- Mitchell, T.F. 1957. The language of buying and selling in Cyrenaica: a situational statement. *Hesperis*. 26. 31-71. Reprinted in T.F. Mitchell. 1975. *Principles of Neo-Firthian Linguistics*. London: Longman. 167-200.



- Nilsen, Don L. F. 1993. Language plays in advertising: linguistic invention in product naming. In James Alatis (ed.), *Language, communication and social meaning*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 272-286.
- O'Barr, William M. 1993. Language and advertising. In James Alatis (ed.), *Language, communication and social meaning*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. 272-286.
- Patpong, Pattama. 2006. *A Systemic Functional Interpretation of Thai Grammar: An Analysis of Narrative Discourse*. Ph.D. thesis, Macquarie University.
- Plum, Guenter A. 1998. Textual and contextual conditioning in spoken English: a genre-based approach. *Monographs in Systemic Linguistics*. Number 10. Department of English Studies: University of Nottingham
- Sinclair, John McH. 1987. Collocation: a progress report. In R Steele and T. Threadgold (eds.), *Language topics: essays in honour of Michael Halliday*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 319-332.
- Toolan, Michael. 1988. The language of press advertising. In Ghadessy (ed.), *Registers of written English: situational factors and linguistic features*. London: Pinter (Open Linguistic Series). pp. 52-65.
- Ungerer, Friedrich. 2004. Ads as news stories, news stories as ads: The interaction of advertisements and editorial texts in newspapers. *Text*. 24(3). 307-328.
- Ure, Jean 1989. Text Typology. MS.
- Ure, Jean and Jeffrey Ellis. 1977. Register in descriptive linguistics and linguistic sociology. In Oscar Uribe-Villegas (ed.), *Issues in Sociolinguistics*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers. 197-243.
- Vestergaard, Torben and Schröder, Kim 1985. *The language of advertising*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Virtanen, Tuija. 1992. Issues of text typology: narrative — a 'basic' type of text?. *Text*. 12(2). 293-310.

Pattama Jor Patpong  
 Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development  
 Mahidol University  
 Nakhorn Pathom 73170  
 Thailand

lcppa@mahidol.ac.th